

The Tragedy of Hamlet

ther: I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custome of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition, that this goodly frame the earth seemes to mee a sterill promontorie; this most excellent Canopie the aire, lookes you, this brave ore-hanged firmament, this majesticall rooffe fretted with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foule and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece a worke is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in forme and moving how expresse and admirable! in action how like an Angel! in apprehension how like a God! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; & yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seeme to say so.

Ros. My Lord there was no such stufte in my thoughts.

Ham. Why did ye laugh then, when I said man delights not me?

Ros. To thinke my Lord, if you delight not in man, what Lenten entertainment the Plaiers shall receive from you, we coated them on the way, and hither are they comming to offer you service.

Ham. He that playes the King shall be welcome, his Majestie shall have tribute of mee, the adventurous Knight shall use his foyle and target, the lover shall not sigh gratis, the humorous man shall end his part in peace, and the Lady shall say her mind freely, or the blanke verse shall halt for't. What players are they?

Ros. Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the Tragedians of the City.

Ham. How chanceth it they travell? their residence both in reputation and profit was better both wayes.

Ros. I thinke their inhibition comes by the meanes of the late innovation.

Ham. Doe they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the City? are they so followed?

Ros. No indeed, they are not.

Ham. It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouthes at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducers a peece for his picture in little: s'blood there is something in this more than naturall, if Philosophy could finde it out.

A Flourish.

Guil. There are the players.

Ham.

Prince of Denmarke.

Ham. Gentlemen you are welcome to *Elfenour*, your hands: come then, th'appurtenance of welcome is fashon and ceremony, let me comply with you in this garbe, lest my extent to the Plaiers, which I tell you must shew fairly outwards, should more appeare like entertainment than yours; you are welcome: but my Uncle-father and Aunt-mother are deceived.

Guy. In what my deare Lord?

Ham. I am but mad North North-west, when the wind is Southerly I know a hawk from a hand-saw.

Enter Polonius.

Pol. Well be with you Gentlemen.

Ham. Harke you *Guyldenstern*, and you too, at each eare a hearer, that great baby as you see is not yet out of his swadling clouts.

Ros. Happely he is the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

Ham. I will prophetic that he comes to tell me of the Players, marke it: You say right sir, a Munday morning 'twas then indeed.

Pol. My Lord I have newes to tell you.

Ham. My Lord I have newes to tell you: when *Rossius* was an Actor in Rome.

Pol. The Actors are come higher my Lord.

Ham. Buz, buz.

Pol. Upon mine honour.

Ham. Then came each Actor on his asse.

Pol. The best Actors in the world, either for Tragedy, Comedy, History, Pastorall, Pastorall-Comick, Historical-Pastorall scene indevidable, or Poem unlimited: *Seneca* cannot bee too heave, nor *Plautus* too light for the law of writ and the liberty; these are the onely men.

Ham. O *Jephtha* Judge of Israel what a treasure hadst thou?

Pol. What a treasure had he my Lord?

Ham. Why one faire daughter and no more, the which hee loved passing well.

Pol. Still on my daughter.

Ham. Am I not i'th right old *Jephtha*?

Pol. What followes then my Lord?

Ham. Why as by lot God wor, and then you know it came to passe, as most like it was: the first row of the pans chanson will shew

shew